

***Belonesox belizanus* Kner 1860**
Pike Killifish



Photo by H. Jelks, USGS

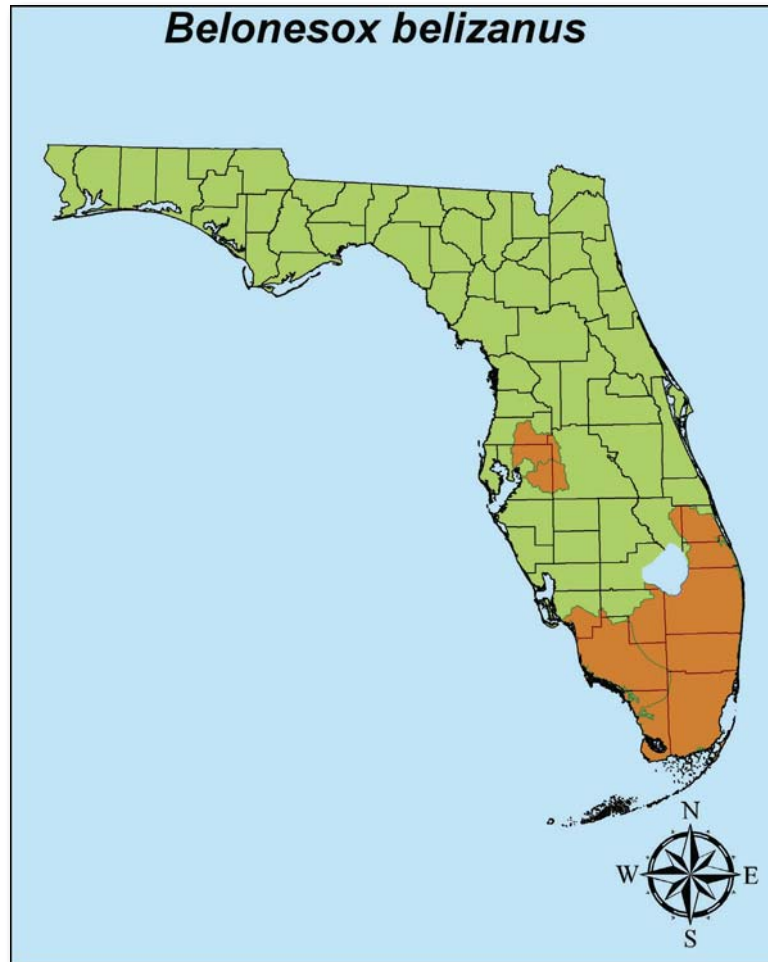
Identification: The body is dark grey dorsally and fades lighter ventrally. Several rows of black spots occur along the side, and a larger black spot is visible along the caudal peduncle (but is sometimes faded). The Pike Killifish has long jaws that form a pointed beak (similar to *Esox*) and contain large teeth. The dorsal-fin origin is well behind the anal-fin origin. As the largest species within the family Poeciliidae, the Pike Killifish reaches 20 cm SL. Sometimes called Picudito or Top Minnow. From Page and Burr (1991) and Miller (2005).

Similar Species: Juvenile Great Barracuda (*Sphyraena barracuda*) has two dorsal fins and mottled body markings. Guaganche (*S. guagancha*) has two dorsal fins and a yellowish mid-body stripe. Southern Sennet (*S. picudilla*) has two dorsal fins and a silvery body.

Native Range: The species is native to the Atlantic slope from Veracruz, Mexico south to the Yucatan, Guatemala and Belize, the Atlantic drainages of Honduras and Guatemala, and to Costa Rica (Rosen and Bailey 1963; Reis et al. 2003; Miller 2005).

Ecology: Most females larger than 75 mm SL and males larger than 55 mm SL are sexually mature. Average brood size is approximately 99, and larger females tend to have larger broods (up to about 320). In south Florida, reproduction continues year-round, and females are able to store viable sperm for several months. Male courtship displays are described by Horth (2004). The young are remarkably precocial; within one day of their birth, they pursue, capture, and eat prey. Adults are primarily piscivorous, and in south Florida eat Mosquitofish, Mollies, and other Pike Killifishes as their primary diet. From Turner and Snelson (1984) except where noted otherwise.

Nonindigenous Occurrences: The species was first observed in the canals of Homestead, Dade County, in 1957 (Belshe 1961). The Pike Killifish is now common in inland waterbodies (especially vegetation-choked canals) of south Florida (Shafland et al. 2008). In the native range as well as in south Florida, the species inhabits freshwater and estuarine habitats and is occasionally found in marine environments.



Poeciliidae (livebearers)